Can A Saved Person Ever Be Lost?

by Evangelist

JOHN R. RICE, D.D., Litt.D.

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WAIT A MINUTE !

The message in this pamphlet has opened the door for thousands of readers into happiness and assurance and daily victory. But before you read it, I earnestly beg you to settle the following questions:

1. Are you willing to take, without question, exactly what the Bible itself says on this question? It may seem illogical, it may seem unreasonable to your human understanding, but the only honest way for a Christian to settle this question is by the Word of God. Are you willing to lay aside all the arguments of men about free will, predestination, Arminianism or Calvinism, forget the doctrines of your church, and turn with an humble heart to the Bible itself, and believe what it says on this question?

2. Can you be humble enough to approach the subject with an open mind? That takes Christian humility. Tradition, self-will, preconceived opinions shut up the mind against God's truth sometimes. Are you really willing to learn?

3. Are you willing to accept a salvation that honors Christ instead of honoring men; that gets people to Heaven by grace instead of by man's works? Are you willing to admit that you deserve to go to Hell and can be saved only by God's mercy and kept only the same way?

4. Will you earnestly pray for the Holy Spirit to open your understanding and guide you into the truth of the Scripture on this question?

If you can honestly say yes to these questions, we believe the doctrine discussed here will be forever settled in your mind after a prayerful study of this pamphlet.

JOHN R. RICE

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CAN A SAVED PERSON EVER BE LOST?

The most important question that ever faced any man is that of the salvation of his own soul. If any man has not settled that question, then let him do so today at any cost, no matter what else must be neglected. To the man who has already trusted in Christ for salvation and thus has been born again, the most important question is the one expressed in the title, "Can a saved person ever be lost?"

Everywhere I go I find people troubled because they do not know but that at any time, because of their sins, their negligence, the sudden besetting of temptation which they might not withstand, they may lose the salvation which they have and so become, not the children of God, but the children of the Devil. Such Christians know that their own hearts are deceitful, they know that they do not deserve the mercies of God; and the fear haunts them that they may lose their salvation and so, perchance, die to be forever lost. For such as these, I bring this message today.

There are many Scriptures which doubtful Christians think teach that a saved person can be lost. I want to review those Scriptures and show you that not one of them either teaches or implies that a saved person can be lost.

John 15:6

For instance there is John 15:6 which says: "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." You see here that a man may be cast forth as a branch and may wither. And there is the startling statement about being cast into the fire! Does this mean that God will cast away one of His children and that that soul will be cast into Hell? No, read it again and see that a man may be out of touch with Christ after he has been saved and so cannot bear fruit; he may be withered and lose all the joy which he had, as Christians many times do. But notice that those which are gathered, in this verse, and cast into the fire are the branches cut from the grapevines, and not men at all. Notice, too, that it is *men* who gather them, while we are

plainly told in Matthew 13:41, 42 that it is angels, not men, who will put the lost in Hell. The Saviour in John 15 is talking to His disciples on the subject of fruit-bearing. Again and again He refers to it in the chapter, teaching that we cannot bear fruit except by abiding in fellowship with Christ and through His power. A withered branch, so worthless to men because it will not bear grapes and is therefore burned up, is used to show how useless is a Christian in God's service who does not abide in Christ. Of course, the difference between men and God is this, that men value grapevines for the grapes, and Christ loves us for ourselves. This Scripture does not teach that a saved person can be lost and does not say so.

Take the Bible at face value. It means exactly what it says and says exactly what it means. Do not add to the meaning of God's Word. In this case *fire* means fire, and does not mean Hell. I think the branches of the vine mean just that, and men cast them into the fire and they are burned, but it does not mean that a Christian man is cast into Hell and burned.

Ezekiel 3:20, 21

Perhaps you have had Ezekiel 3:20, 21 pointed out as a Scripture which teaches that a saved person may be lost. It says:

"Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul."

But careful reading of these verses and of the chapter will show that it has no reference to the salvation of a soul nor to the loss of a soul. The message is to Israel (see verse 17). The righteousness of the righteous man mentioned here does not refer to salvation but to a citizen of Israel keeping the Mosaic Law. The penalty mentioned is not eternal damnation nor the loss of a soul, but simply physical death. The only salvation mentioned for the wicked in this case is "to save his life" (verse 18). We preachers have spiritualized this passage and made it mean what it does not say. The righteousness mentioned is not the righteousness of Christ but the self-righteousness of a Jew under the law. The Jew

who had never committed a murder, adultery, nor any other major crime, would yet, if he turned from his righteous way and committed such a crime, be taken out and stoned; that is, he should die in his sin. This passage clearly has no reference to a saved person becoming lost. Ezekiel 18:24 and 33:12, 13 are two other passages nearly identical in meaning. Read these and see.

Do you see the danger of spiritualizing away the plain meaning of the Bible, and making it mean something it does not say?

II Peter 2:20-22, Dogs and Sows

"For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

Whoever the people indicated in these Scriptures were, we can see the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. Many people believe that this Scripture tells the story of a man once saved but who is entangled in the pollutions of the world and finally lost.

But notice these things about this passage: the escape was through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The Scripture does not say that these trusted Jesus. Many lost people know about the gospel and about Christ. We see from verse 21 that they knew the way of righteousness. But the Scripture does not indicate that they ever walked in it. In verse 22 the dog is still a dog and the sow is still a sow. The dog returning again to his vomit is a picture of a sinner returning again to the sin that made him sick. The sow that was washed returns to wallowing in the mud because she is still a sow with a sow's nature. God never calls His people either dogs or hogs anywhere in the Bible. Both are used as symbols of the unsaved. If God had made this sow into a sheep and changed her nature as He does the nature of one who is born again, the sheep would not have delighted in the mud like a sow, even if through carelessness she became soiled. There are too many people who are still sows and the only washing they ever had was on the outside with no change of their sinful natures.

In this chapter, from verses 1 and 2 it is easily seen that the Lord is not talking to saved people at all but to enlightened lost people who return to their sins and do not accept Christ.

Hebrews 10:26-29, Jew Rejecting Christ

"For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"

Does this Scripture teach that a saved person can be lost? It speaks of one who has been sanctified in verse 29.

But this does not refer to a Christian. It is in the book of Hebrews addressed to Israel. The covenant mentioned in verse 29 is God's covenant with Israel, whereby Israel was sanctified, that is, set apart, as a chosen people to God. The Hebrew sacrifices of the Old Testament, all of them, were reminders of this covenant; and the blood was a picture of that which Jesus would shed as the complete sacrifice for Israel's sin. This Scripture then applies to those of Israel who looked forward to the coming Saviour; but when He came, or when they received knowledge of Him, they would not accept Him. Those who wilfully reject the Christ cannot find any other sacrifice to take away their sins. Verse 39 in the same chapter, referring to Christian Jews, says: "But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." This Scripture, then, does not teach that a saved person can be lost. It does teach that if a Jew, after coming to the knowledge of the truth that Christ is our sacrifice for sin, then continues wilfully in the sin of unbelief, rejecting Christ, no other sacrifice can take away his sins and there is no other way for him to be saved.

Matthew 12:43-45, The Unclean Spirit

This is sometimes held to teach that saved souls may be lost. It says:

"When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith,

I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.

But notice that the unclean spirit is not driven out of the man but goes out himself. He says, "I will return into *my* house." The house still belongs to him; the man is unsaved. Notice too, that he found the house empty; that is, Christ was not in it. This is a picture of a man who reforms without salvation. Notice in the last sentence of this Scripture that Jesus applies it to the ungodly Pharisees about whom He is talking (verse 38).

Galatians 5:4, Falling From Grace

But does not the Scripture say in Galatians 5:4, "Ye are fallen from grace"? Yes, but read the whole verse and see that this refers to one who would be justified by the law, that is, one who is counting on his own righteousness to save him. "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." Grace is a higher plan than the law, and these Galatians had begun to teach salvation by circumcision and the laws of Moses instead of staying with God's high gospel of mercy that people could be saved by faith. You can see it has no reference to a saved person becoming lost. "Ye are fallen from grace" here means "you have departed from God's plan of salvation by grace; you have fallen into false doctrine."

Does God Blot Christians Out of His Book?

In Exodus 32: 31-33, we are told of Moses' prayer to God for Israel after they had sinned so terribly in worshipping the golden calf which Aaron made. That Scripture says:

"And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written. And the Lord said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book."

Christians sometimes believe that Moses here referred to the book of life and that the Lord threatened to blot out of the book

of life the names of people who have sinned after they were converted. But that is not the meaning of the Scripture, as a careful reading will show you. In the first place, there is no reason to believe that God had then written all of the book of life. That book had never been mentioned in the Bible up to this time. But God had given definite and clear promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and then to the whole nation through Moses about the land of Canaan and that Israel should go into the land and possess it. Moses meant that he would be willing to be left out of Canaan, left out of God's promises for Israel as a nation, in order for the sins of the people to be forgiven. Yet God said, "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book." God meant evidently that those who rebelled against God and worshipped idols would be left out of His plan and would miss the privilege of going into the land of Canaan. A little later we find that not a single one of the grown men who were present at that time was allowed to go into the land of Canaan, but all were blotted out of God's promises for the nation because of their sin, and their little children later went into the land and inherited it. God is not talking about salvation here but is dealing with Israel under covenant and law. It is not here primarily a question of Heaven and Hell but of physical life and death, of being carried into Canaan under God's covenant or of being rejected and having their dead bodies left in the wilderness.

Revelation 3:5 is another Scripture that mentions the blotting out of names. That verse says: "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels."

I remember that a woman once brought me this Scripture as proof that a saved person could be lost. When we examined it together, I said, "But notice this verse promises that God will NOT blot out one's name. When you find a verse that says He will blot out one's name from the book of life, that will be different."

This time it is the book of life God discusses. But to comfort those striving to overcome, God promises He will not blot out their names. Do not read into the Book more than it says. Do not add to the Bible. God said what He meant. Had He meant more He would have said more. God does not say and does not mean

that He will blot out the name of any child of His from the book of life.

"God Shall Take Away His Part Out of the Book of Life."
—Rev. 22:19

Another Scripture which sometimes troubles Christians who fear that they may become lost is Revelation 22:19, which says: "And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." This time the Scripture clearly says concerning certain people that God shall take away their part out of the book of life. But it does not say that God will blot out any one's name which is written in the book of life. What then does the Lord mean here? This Scripture evidently means that salvation is bought and paid for for every man and woman in the world. In I John 2:2 we are told that "He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." Every sinner has a part purchased for him in the book of life and in "the holy city," bought by the blood of Christ, which he may occupy if he will accept the Saviour as his own and the eternal life which is freely offered. That PART is prepared for every man, and it is his opportunity. But one who rejects the Bible and turns his back on God's revelation will thereby, of course, miss the way of salvation pictured in the Bible and will not accept the Saviour and therefore will miss Heaven. This Scripture evidently means that those who reject the Bible will miss the plan of salvation and all the good things which Christ has bought for them. It certainly does not mean that one of God's children will be lost, that one whose name is written in the book of life already will have his name blotted out.

"Lest . . . I . . . Should Be a Castaway."—I Cor. 9:27

In I Corinthians 9:27 Paul tells how carefully he controlled and buffeted his fleshly nature, lest he should be a castaway. Did Paul mean that he was afraid he would lose his soul? Read that verse and see. "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." The word "castaway" here is translated from a Greek word meaning literally "not approved." Paul really means that after God has greatly used him to preach the gospel and has shown His approval on Paul's ministry by Holy Spirit

power, that even Paul could lose that Holy Spirit power and find himself not approved of God for the ministry if he lets the fleshly nature control his life. How many preachers there are who once held great revivals, once had a great ministry and won many souls and blessed many hearts, but now have no power, have few if any conversions, and their ministry is marked "not approved" by the Lord! As far as the ministry is concerned, some men who were once used are now castaways, unprofitable servants, instruments not fit for God's use in the ministry.

In John 6:37 Jesus plainly promises that the individual soul that comes to Him for salvation will in no wise be cast out. The Christian is in no danger of losing his soul. He may lose the approval of God on his service and be laid on the shelf. It was this disapproval of God, the possibility of losing his power and being set aside as a preacher, which Paul feared. Paul was not afraid of losing his salvation.

Do Good Works Keep a Christian Saved?

There are several passages in the Bible which emphasize Christians' works, and people many times believe that these passages imply one will not remain saved unless he works.

Philippians 2:12, Working Out Your Salvation

For instance, Philippians 2:12 says: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." But when you read the following verse, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure," you will see that Paul here speaks of working out that which you already have. A man cannot work out his cotton crop until he has a cotton crop; a man cannot let his light shine out until he has a light in his heart; a man cannot work out his salvation to a lost world until he has the salvation. The Saviour promised that we could have a well of water within us for a thirsty world and that we should be the light of the world and the salt of the earth. This does not mean work for your salvation, but it does mean work your salvation out to others.

Matthew 24:13, Enduring to the End

"But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." This Scripture seems, to the careless reader, to teach that salvation depends upon holding out faithfully or enduring unto the end. But if you read carefully the chapter, you will see that Jesus is

talking about the Great Tribulation period at the end of this age, that the salvation mentioned is salvation of the flesh, not salvation of the soul. Verse 21 says, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." The time mentioned here is the Great Tribulation time. And verse 22 says, "And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved." The salvation mentioned here is the salvation of the flesh, that is, the rescue of literal Jews from physical death during the Great Tribulation period. Take the Bible at face value. You see that this Scripture does not teach salvation by works or by holding out faithfully.

To those Jews who will be so terribly persecuted in the tribulation period Jesus says in effect, "If you are able to endure these persecutions to the end of the tribulation period, I will come and rescue you out of the hands of the Antichrist."

Hebrews 6:4-6, The Unpardonable Sin

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."

Notice this Scripture says, "If they shall fall away." Is the one mentioned in this Scripture a saved man? He has been enlightened, has tasted the heavenly gift and the good Word of God and the powers of the world to come. He has even had something to do with the Holy Ghost. The words here, "partakers of the Holy Ghost," in the marginal reading are, "going along with the Holy Ghost." But there are several things that show this is not a saved person who has become lost. A lost man can be enlightened, that is, may learn about Christ. He can have tasted the heavenly gift of the Word of God, etc.; and you notice here this one did not eat, but simply tasted. The Holy Ghost goes along with a lost man convicting him as He did Saul of Tarsus, pricking his conscience day by day. This is a lost man. Some Christians may say, "These verses fit my case exactly, I was a Christian and right with God, and I fell away like this Scripture says." If this be true, whoever has done according to this Scripture is lost without hope forever. "For it is impossible . . . to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put

him to an open shame." No, dear friend, this is not about a Christian who has fallen into sin, but this is that one unpardonable sin of a lost man who, after great enlightenment, deliberately, maliciously, and finally rejects Christ and blasphemes the Holy Ghost (Matt. 12:31).

In Matthew 12:31, 32, Jesus said that every kind of sin and blasphemy in the world would be forgiven except the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. That means there can only be one unpardonable sin and all other sins can be forgiven. But the sin mentioned here in Hebrews 6:4-6 cannot be forgiven, because the Scripture says, "It is impossible . . . to renew them again unto repentance." This, then, is the unpardonable sin of a lost man who has never been saved and does not refer at all to a child of God becoming lost.

Bible Characters Who Fell Into Sin

Judas

Many prominent men of the Bible fell into grievous sin. Were these men saved? If so, did they become lost? Judas Iscariot is most often mentioned in this connection. He betrayed the Saviour, and, according to Acts 1:25, I believe that Judas went to Hell as a lost soul. Acts 1:25 says: "That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place." In John 6:64-71 the Saviour plainly tells us that Judas never believed and was never saved. He knew from the beginning that Judas would betray Him, and He knew that Judas was a devil. Read some of these verses and see what Jesus said about Judas Iscariot:

"But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him." – verse 64.

"Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve." – verses 67-71.

Judas was never saved, and so never lost his salvation. He never did believe in Christ, but was a devil; so when he died he went to

his own place. Certainly Judas is not an example of a Christian losing salvation.

Lot – A Backslidden Christian

Lot was guilty of terrible sins. He ran in bad company; he let his town go to Hell without winning a soul; he drank, and so was indirectly responsible for the ruin of his own daughters. If any man could lose his salvation, it seems that Lot would have lost his. But we must not guess about this matter. Let us turn to II Peter 2:7, 8 and find what God's Word says about Lot: "And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked. (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds)." Lot, even in the midst of Sodom, is called "just Lot," is called "that righteous man," and it is said that he had a "righteous soul"! Lot's righteousness was the same as the righteousness of present Christians, the imputed righteousness of Christ. He was justified by faith, without the deeds of the law (Rom. 3:28), not of his works but of God's grace. Lot certainly sinned, but certainly was not lost when God said these things about him. We know that Lot lost his family, lost his money, lost his joy, because of his sins; but he did not lose his soul, for God said he was a just man with a righteous soul.

David's Sins

David committed sins of murder and adultery. We must condemn his sins. They were bad. But David's sins were under the blood of Christ, and in the fifty-first Psalm, the prayer of David shows that he had not lost his salvation, but lost the joy of salvation. Psalm 51:11, 12 says: "Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit." David does not ask for the restoration of salvation, but he does ask that God will restore the *joy* of salvation. He prays that God will not break the fellowship, will not cast him away from God's presence, will not take away the communion of the Holy Spirit. A backslider like David ought to pray for the joy of salvation to be restored, but he should not believe that God hast cast away His child. David sinned, but he did not become a lost sinner again. So David praised God, under divine inspiration, saying: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed

is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity" (Psalm 32:1, 2). The Scripture shows why David did not lose his salvation and why a saved man cannot be lost.

"Implied" Doctrines

Perhaps, my troubled friends, there are other Scriptures which come to your mind. I have given those upon which the doctrine of losing salvation is generally based. But you say some other Scriptures "seem to imply" that a saved person can be lost. That is one of the sad things that has filled the world with false doctrine today: people teach some doctrine which the Bible does not anywhere plainly teach but which they think is "implied" somewhere. A question so important as this ought to be settled by the Word of God; and I promise you if you will prayerfully take the Scripture which I give you, word for word, this matter will be settled forever in your own heart that a saved person can never be lost.

A Positive Bible Teaching That a Saved Person Cannot Be Lost

I have shown that there is no teaching in the Bible that a saved person may become lost. Now let us turn to some of the many passages wherein the Bible very clearly and unmistakably teaches the eternal security and safety of the man who has trusted in Christ. Every teaching about salvation is a teaching of everlasting salvation.

A Christian Has Been Born Again

Salvation is likened to a birth in John 1:13 and John 3:3, 5-7. Saved people are now the children of God (I John 3:2). A child cannot become unborn, and the relationship of a father and child cannot be ended. Notice too, that the Bible mentions many times the second birth but never a third birth. To be born again once is enough. When I have become God's child, that is as settled as when I was born my father's child.

Again I beg you to take the Bible at face value. When Jesus teaches that a Christian is born again, has become a child of God, has a right to call God "our Father," He means exactly that. There is a real change when a sinner is converted. He becomes a child of God and is born into the family of God as definitely as my children are born into my family. II Peter 1:4 says: "Whereby

are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE NATURE, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." A Christian is literally a child of God and has become a partaker of the divine nature. Whatever that man does, God has become his Father and he has become a child of God. My children stay in my family, not by virtue of their goodness but by virtue of their birth. We are God's children on the same basis, born into His family. That is the meaning of Romans 8:14-17 which says:

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."

If the mother's love fails for her baby, God's love is greater. Even though a child on account of sin may lose fellowship with his earthly father, yet the child partakes of the nature of the father. They may have the same eyes or hair or ways. So, though a Christian may lose sweet fellowship with the Father by his sins, yet he is still God's child, partaker of the divine nature. God punishes His children when they sin, but they are His children still.

The Bible could not honestly use this picture of a birth and a relation of father and child concerning God and His people if it were not so that when one is saved he enters into a permanent relationship with God whieh does not change. One's fellowship changes, but his relationship does not.

Everlasting Life

More than forty-five times the terms "eternal life" and "everlasting life" are used in the Bible. Besides, many other times such terms as "eternal redemption," "eternal glory," "eternal salvation," "eternal inheritance," etc., are used. These terms are used more often in the Gospel of John than elsewhere, but everywhere they are used the promise of everlasting life is given to those who believe. John 3:16 is a glorious example of this. One hundred and one times in the Gospel of John the words "believe," "believing" or "believed" are used, and most of the times referring to the plan of salvation. And many times, with instance piled upon

instance, it is stated that a man has everlasting life when he believes.

The Believer Has Everlasting Life Already

God promises everlasting life to the believer, and that everlasting life is a PRESENT POSSESSION of the believer. John 3:36 says: "He that believeth on the Son HATH EVERLASTING LIFE." Put that in modern English and it simply says: "He that believes (or trusts) on the Son HAS EVERLASTING LIFE." That is literally what the Bible says. I have trusted Him, so I HAVE IT; THANK GOD, I HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE! The Scripture does not say that the believer WILL HAVE everlasting life, but says that the believer HAS IT NOW!

The same thing is repeated again and again in the Bible. John 6:47 says: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me HATH EVERLASTING LIFE." There again, God says the believer HAS EVERLASTING LIFE. John 5:24 says: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, HATH EVERLASTING LIFE, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." Brother, take God's Word for it and be happy. If you have trusted in Christ, you now have life, everlasting life, life that will last forever; and you will not lose it! Praise the Lord!

When I believed in Jesus I had the life and I had the everlasting also. Suppose that ten years after I got everlasting life I should sin and lose it. Then that would not be everlasting because it only lasted ten years. But God has guaranteed everlasting life to the one who trusts Christ. You notice that in each case the word "believeth" is used in the present tense, but the everlasting life runs on into eternity. Anybody who has everlasting life can never lose it. Doubting soul, look not at your own unworthiness, but look to the eternal promises of God that when you believed in Christ you got everlasting life. There is no other honest way to interpret these promises of God than to take them at their face value and thank God.

But the Lord piles promise on top of promise. In John 6:37 He promises that a saved person will never be cast out. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and HIM THAT COMETH TO ME I WILL IN NO WISE CAST OUT." Thank God for that "in no wise." Jesus says He will not cast out a saved person under any condition in the world. Your sins, even since you were

saved, may have been mighty black, and in fact it is quite sure that they have been! But He will not cast you out. He said so Himself.

That great old hymn, "How Firm a Foundation," the hymn my mother wanted sung to her a few minutes before she went home to Heaven, says it so sweetly:

"The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to its foes;
That soul, though all Hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no, never, no, never forsake!"

This safety is not earned. We do not deserve it. This safety of a child of God depends on the goodness of God, His faithfulness to keep His promises. Thank God, it does not depend on my efforts nor on my deserts. I can safely trust His promise, who said that He would never cast me out!

No Condemnation to One Who Has Believed

The saved person will not come into condemnation, for John 5:24 says: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." A believer shall not come into condemnation! That reaches on through to the end of eternity without any limit. The reason is given here: because the sinner is passed from death unto life. The Revised Version will make it clearer even yet, for as translated there this verse says about the believer that he "hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment." The reason a saved person will not ever be condemned is because he will not even come before the court to be tried! Christ has already been tried, counted guilty, and borne the punishment for all the sins that a believer ever has done or ever will do; and the sinner has passed out of the death of sin and will not come into condemnation nor ever come to judgment. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. 8:34).

None Can Take Us Out of the Hands of Christ

Another such blessed promise is in John 10:28. Speaking of His sheep Jesus said: "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." Notice a triple promise here concerning the security of

God's sheep. First, Christ gives them "eternal" life. Second, they shall "never" perish, and third, neither shall any pluck them out of Christ's hand. Brother, are you one of Christ's sheep? If so, you have eternal life, you will never perish and cannot be taken from His hand. The last promise is all the stronger when you notice in your Bible that the word "man" in this verse is in italics which shows it was not in the original at all. No one, either man or devil, can take one of Christ's sheep out of His hands. And the following verse adds for extra security that God the Father, who gave us to Jesus Christ, is greater than any one and no one can take us out of the hands of the Father. What blessed, blessed safety is ours who have trusted in Christ Jesus!

Nothing Can Separate the Believer from the Love of God

Paul was certainly confident about the safety of his soul. To the young preacher, Timothy, he wrote, "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (II Tim. 1:12). Paul was certainly "persuaded" about this matter, for he uses the same word in Romans 8:38, 39, under divine inspiration. "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Nothing in death, nothing in life, can separate us from the love of God. Angels cannot. Remember that the Devil seems to be a fallen angel. Principalities and powers cannot. Certainly the Devil is a power. Things present cannot separate us from the love of God, nor can anything that ever will come in the future, says Paul here. Nothing in the height all the way up to Heaven can come between us and God, and nothing in the depth all the way down to Hell can separate us from His love. Then the Lord, knowing our doubts, our unbelief, and our conscious unworthiness, after He has named everything that a poor forgiven sinner might be afraid of, yet adds the other words, *"nor any other creature."* Nothing ever created can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord! That is the kind of salvation I have, the kind every believer has, and the kind every lost sinner can have if he will trust in Christ!

Are We Saved by Works or by Grace?

Many Christians think this blessed teaching is too good to be true and some call it a dangerous doctrine to say a saved man cannot be lost. But one is never on dangerous ground when he takes the promises of God. What then is the basis for this great salvation? It is all in the merits of Christ. Salvation is of grace, "not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:9). Paul wrote to Titus that it was "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us" (Titus 3:5). No man ever got saved by doing good, for "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight" (Rom. 3:20). And "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Rom. 3:28). Man cannot get saved by his works nor keep saved by his works. You did not deserve salvation when you got it, and you never have deserved it any single day you have ever lived since you got it. Salvation is of grace, that is, the loving mercy of God. If a man's safety after salvation depends on his works, then he is really saved by his works and must earn his salvation. That would take glory from Christ and put it on man. The fact is that if any person in the world got what he deserved, he would go to Hell, for all have sinned and do sin, day by day. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (I John 1:8). And the wages of sin is death. There can be no salvation either obtained or kept by man's goodness, lest in eternity "any man should boast." Salvation is "the gift of God," we are "justified freely." No man deserves it or ever will, either before he gets it or after.

Sin Is Not Charged Up to the Christian

Read prayerfully that blessed fourth chapter of Romans and see how Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him for righteousness. There we are told in verses 5 to 8 that the same thing is true of every believer:

"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."

The righteousness which I have as a Christian is really the righteousness of Christ which was charged to my account when I trusted in Him. My sins likewise were charged up to Christ, and He has already paid for them. When Christ died on the cross, He died for all the sins that I ever have committed or ever will, though I had not yet been born. That one sacrifice had to be sufficient to pay for all sin, and there will never be another sacrifice for man's sins. So when I trusted Christ, I got forgiveness for all my sins; and from this time on my sins are charged back to Christ and are not charged against me at all. That is what God means when He says, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose SINS ARE COVERED. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord WILL NOT IMPUTE SIN." That is the reason that a Christian will not come into condemnation and will not even come into judgment as far as his soul's salvation is concerned. The security of my soul depends, then, not at all on my goodness, for I am not good; but it depends on the righteousness of Christ and His faithful promises.

Does It Matter How a Christian Lives?

Perhaps some one will say then that it does not matter how a Christian lives if there is no danger of his losing his soul. How foolish and short-sighted such a statement is! Would you say to my daughter that it does not matter how she lives since her position as my daughter is secure? It is true she is my daughter; she always will be; and I dare say that even my poor human father-love would not fail her no matter what she did. But she could easily lose the sweet communion with her father, crush all his pride in her, and lose all the happiness which she now has. So it is with God's children; sin breaks the communion with the Father, takes away the joy of salvation and loses much of the reward a Christian might have. First Corinthians 3:12-15 discusses this reward and shows that the evil works of a Christian will be burned up and only the good works remain. But the Scripture goes on to say, "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: BUT HE HIMSELF SHALL BE SAVED; YET SO AS BY FIRE."

It certainly does matter how a Christian lives!

Sin Does Not Pay

Beside the matter of fellowship and rewards, God punishes His own children for their sins. My daughters are mine and therefore I feel responsible for them and must chasten them for their good. So God whips His children because of His love and chastises them for their sins (Heb. 12:5-8). Christians are punished in this life and may be judged and ashamed at the judgment seat of Christ, where all of us must stand (II Cor. 5:9-11), but do not ever go to Hell.

On account of David's sin, his baby died; and evidently because of his example, his son, Amnon, ruined his own sister, Tamar. Amnon was murdered by another brother, Absalom, who was also David's son. Then Absalom tried to take the kingdom away from David and was killed. Sin did not pay with David and it never pays anybody else. God whips His children for their sins, but thank God, He never does forsake them nor allow their souls to be lost – those for whom Christ died and who trusted in Him.

In fact, dear friend, if you have thus settled that your soul is kept safe by the power of God through the merits of Jesus Christ, you are prepared to serve Him as never before. Love is a greater motive than fear. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God"! (I John 3:1). Oh, the depth of the riches of God! His salvation is everlasting, and one He has saved shall not come into condemnation but is passed from death unto life!

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